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RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 9018
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 6311
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0884
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1700
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000093

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SUBJECT: MONEY TALKS - TAIWAN "BLUE" AND "GREEN" MEDIA RUN EACH
OTHER'S ADS

REF: TAIPEI 0058, TAIPEI 0061, TAIPEI 0063, TAIPEI 0065,
TAIPEI 0075

¶1. Summary: (SBU) Taiwan's ever-developing democracy is proving lucrative as the media cash in on the elections. Political parties spent heavily on television commercials and campaign advertisements in the run-up to the January 12 legislative election. Despite their political bias in day-to-day news coverage, when it comes to business, Taiwan media ran all the campaign ads they could get and even offered special packages to try to attract more campaign ads from political parties. A review of election ads for the final three campaign days revealed that major parties placed most of their campaign ads in the media outlets they believed would attract the most voters, including those that normally portray them unfavorably.

This campaign ad strategy is further evidence of how far down the multi-party democracy road Taiwan has traveled. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Though the accusation that most Taiwan media slant "blue" (pro KMT) or "green" (pro DPP) is often borne out in their one-sided news reports, editorials and talk shows, the placement of campaign ads leading up to January 12 Legislative Yuan (LY) elections showed that media from both sides gladly accepted money to run the other side's ads. The KMT, the DPP and a host of smaller parties were willing to take their chances in running ads in media not customarily supportive of their parties. It is yet another milestone in Taiwan's development as a democracy.

¶3. (U) In the three days leading up to the Jan. 12 LY election, the KMT placed more campaign commercials on TV than the DPP. However, the DPP government also ran many TV and newspaper ads in the name of the Government Information Office (GIO) and the Central Election Commission (CEC) to promote (DPP) government achievements and to boost turnout for (DPP-sponsored) referenda.

TV: BLUE ON GREEN; GREEN ON BLUE

¶4. (U) A representative sample of TV ads: From 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Jan. 9, the KMT ran campaign ads soliciting party votes 31 times on four TV news channels, while the DPP ran ads 23 times. The GIO and the CEC ran TV ads 12 times.

¶5. (U) Interestingly, during this time period, the KMT ran more campaign ads (nine) than the DPP (four) on "green" Sanlih TV. The

reverse was equally interesting: the DPP ran eight ads to the KMT's six on "blue" CTI TV in the same time period.

¶6. (U) The parties took different tacks in their ads. The KMT's TV campaign ads featured anguished voices from various walks of life, especially from working class voters. They roundly criticized President Chen Shui-bian and his family, and the government's poor economic performance, urging voters to use their ballots to punish the DPP. The KMT also heavily ran one ad in which KMT Chairman Wu Po-hsiung reminded blue supporters of the KMT's failure in the last election and the importance of solidarity.

¶7. (U) The DPP's campaign ads appealed to that party's historical contribution to Taiwan's democracy, condemning the KMT for obstreperousness in the LY and impugning the party for its "ill-gotten" assets.

¶8. (U) The Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), once considered part of the green camp, expressed the party's concern for minority groups and stressed the importance of having a third force in addition to the KMT and the DPP. TSU ads featured its leader, former President Lee Teng-hui, denouncing the DPP, despite the erstwhile DPP-TSU alliance. During the sample period AIT monitored, the TSU ran TV ads 20 times, canvassing party votes. Their advertising efforts appeared in vain - the party failed to pick up a single seat in the LY.

PRINT PRESS: APPLE "WINS" IN THE ELECTION

¶9. (U) In the print press, the Apple Daily (circulation 500,000, second-largest in Taiwan) received the most campaign ads among the

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four major island-wide Chinese-language dailies, thanks to the tabloid's neutral political position and its strong appeal to young readers, a major swing constituency with a spotty voting record. One creatively placed ad in the Jan. 10 edition showed an irate Ma Ying-jeou accusing President Chen of poor leadership. This full-page page 3 ad faced a full-page page 2 exclusive interview with President Chen.

¶10. (U) The pro-independence, "green" Liberty Times (circulation 720,000), though Taiwan's top-circulation newspaper, attracted fewer campaign ads than Apple Daily, and the KMT ran only one token advertisement in it during the three days before the elections.

¶11. (U) The two "blue" newspapers - United Daily News and China Times - carried more ads for the KMT than for other parties, but DPP candidates still purchased ads in significant numbers in these two publications.

¶12. (U) Meanwhile, smaller parties such as the New Party, the Home Party, the Constitutional Alliance, Third Society Party and Taiwan Farmers' Party, all ran TV campaign ads on major TV channels and newspapers, including CTI, TVBS, SET, Apple Daily, United Daily News, China Times and Liberty Times, hoping to capture legislator-at-large seats. Their advertising efforts were all in vain. The Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (not even technically a party) was the only small political organization to run ads and actually win seats (three).

KMT SPENDS BIG; WINS BIG

¶13. (U) Both the KMT and the DPP accused each other of excessive spending on campaign ads while refusing to disclose their own budgets to the public. "Economic Daily News" reported on January 6 that the DPP would spend a total of NT 60 million (\$1.82 million) in campaign ads in the course of the 2008 LY and presidential elections. Other news reports quoted a KMT spokesman as saying the KMT's budget for campaign ads totaled about NT 10 million (\$300,000) for the legislative election. Singapore's "Lianhe Zaobao" estimated the two parties combined spent at least NT 100 million (\$3 million)

on advertisements during the legislative elections.

¶14. (SBU) Political party campaign ads paid off most handsomely for the KMT, which scored a landslide victory (reftels). KMT spokeswoman Chen Shu-rong told AIT/PAS that the KMT placed campaign ads in all media, both blue and green, "to get support from as many voters as possible." Whether the media were blue or green "were not issues." The KMT spent a considerable amount of money on commercials on "green" TV stations, she explained, in order to attract swing voters. Chen said the KMT's campaign ads (read: income from ads) were welcomed by TV stations and, even more, by Taiwan's chronically impecunious newspapers. Chen acknowledged that the KMT paid three TV stations -- TVBS, CTI and China Television (CTV) -- to broadcast three KMT rallies live.

¶15. (SBU) Meanwhile, Hsieh I-chun, Deputy Director of DPP's Culture and Information Department, told AIT/PAS the KMT's TV ads greatly outnumbered the DPP's because the DPP is underfinanced. He said that the DPP placed TV campaign ads on all major TV channels while concentrating on specific channels to run ads intensively on the final day. TV stations also offered "discount packages" to political parties, but Hsieh refused to reveal the price of running a TV campaign ad.

¶16. (U) AIT monitored the following media, Jan. 9-11, for this report. Their customary news biases are in parentheses:

TVBS -- popular cable news channel (Blue)
CTI Television -- pro-KMT cable news channel (Blue)
Sanlih Television -- popular pro-Taiwan news channel (Green)
Formosa Television -- pro-DPP news channel (Green)
Liberty Times -- pro-independence daily (Green)
Apple Daily -- popular tabloid-style daily (Neutral)
United Daily News -- pro-unification daily (Blue)
China Times -- pro-KMT daily (Blue)

YOUNG